



Mariellen Harper

March 10, 1918 - March 5, 2012

“I been glad I been here” are words of one of Mariellen Harper’s kindergarten students.

Mariellen died at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center at age 93. Her family is grateful for the extraordinary, compassionate care she received there over her final five days.

She was born to Hazel and Clarence McCracken in Sharpville, Pa. After receiving a two-year teaching certificate, she continued her education by attending summer sessions at Pennsylvania State University. She taught elementary school in Pennsylvania for four years. During one of those years, her much younger sister, Janet, was a pupil in her classroom.

In 1940, while on a Penn State student bicycle ride, she met Jim Harper, an Oregonian studying for his Master of Science. In 1942, Mariellen traveled to Oregon to visit Jim, who was then teaching at Oregon State College.

The night before Mariellen was to leave for Oregon, a Japanese submarine shelled Fort Stevens, at the mouth of the Columbia River. The trip west was exciting, as the trains were filled with service people traveling to their assignments, and blackout measures were required on the train traveling north on the Pacific Coast.

This visit was planned to last a month, but lasted 69 years. Mariellen and Jim were married on Sept. 11, 1942, in the Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan (the building is now The Arts Center) by the Rev. Dean Vincent Gray.

Mariellen resumed her education at OSC, and graduated in 1944 with a Bachelor of Science degree in home economics. She believed her background in child development proved to be of great value in her 23 years of teaching kindergarten at Harding and Jefferson schools.

At her retirement party in 1980, it was noted that she had taught 1,869 children in kindergarten. In her later years, it gave her great pleasure to meet with or have news of her former students and their families.

Mariellen was a member of the OSU Folk Club, and for many years a volunteer at the club's thrift shop. She was a long-term member of Chapter S of P.E.O., and a founding member of the

S, B and C Club. She and Jim were charter members of the Corvallis Rose Society, founded in 1955. They joined the Monads Dance Club in 1945.

As long as her health permitted, she and Jim swam five days a week at Osborn Aquatic Center, and later at Timberhill Athletic Club. For many years, they were regulars at the Friday Night Senior Dance Club.

Following her retirement, Mariellen joined writing groups at the Corvallis Senior Center and the Church of the Good Samaritan. She consolidated her writing into three self-published books, her favorite one being "I Been Glad I Been Here: Stories from Kindergarten."

Her writing skills included letters and notes to family, friends and church and community members. In one year when she kept a record, these totaled 578.

Raised as a Baptist, following marriage Mariellen became an enthusiastic convert to the teachings and liturgical worship of the Episcopal Church. She was active in the Church of the Good Samaritan as chairman of the Liturgical Arts Committee, co-chairman of the church's senior library, and a member of the Newcomers Committee and the Worship Committee.

She was for a time president of the Episcopal Churchwomen, and was very pleased last November when the former and present members of Good Samaritan's ECW received an award called "The Wonder Women of ECW" from the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon.

Well into their 80s, Mariellen and Jim traveled the world, but always their

favorite place was their log cabin on Ten Mile Creek near Yachats.

Mariellen is survived by her husband of 69 years, James Arthur (Jim) Harper; son, James D. Harper, M.D., and his wife, Janie, of Fort Worth, Texas; daughter, Margaret Norrande of Bainbridge Island, Wash., and her husband, Mark; sister, Janet Lambert of Decorah, Iowa; brother, Col. David McCracken, USAF (Ret.), of Cheyenne, Wyo., and his wife, Helen; six grandchildren, Jeff Harper and his wife, Cindy, of Lubbock, Texas, Josh Harper of Arlington, Texas, Holly Trevino of Arlington, Caroline Harper of Fort Worth, and twins Anne and Margaret Harper of Fort Worth.

She is also survived by four great-grandsons: Zach, Riddik, Roman and Jackson; and many beloved nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews.

A memorial celebration of her life and her faith will take place at 1 p.m. April 14 at the Church of the Good Samaritan. Private interment in the courtyard will precede the service. Mariellen's wishes for memorial donations include the Church of the Good Samaritan Foundation for the Courtyard Beautification Fund; the Corvallis Rose Society; Heartland Humane Society; and Old Mill Center for Children and Families, all in care of McHenry Funeral Home.